

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An article comprising:
 - a facet prosthesis at least partially mounted in a lumen artificially formed between superior and inferior halves of a facet joint; and
 - an elastomeric cushioning element disposed in said facet prosthesis.
2. The article according to claim 1, wherein said elastomeric cushioning element includes first and second mechanical fasteners at opposite ends thereof which are attachable to superior and inferior halves of the facet joint.
3. The article according to claim 2, wherein said elastomeric cushioning element expands radially outwards upon axial movement of said first and second mechanical fasteners towards each other.
4. The article according to claim 2, wherein said first and second mechanical fasteners comprise an expandable sleeve member, the facet prosthesis further comprising a wedge insertable into said expandable sleeve member, wherein the sleeve expands radially upon insertion of the wedge into the sleeve.
5. The article according to claim 4, wherein said expandable sleeve member has an axial slit formed therein.
6. The article according to claim 1, wherein said elastomeric cushioning element includes a plurality of elastomeric balls disposed in said lumen and sealed in said lumen with end caps.
7. The article according to claim 1, wherein said elastomeric cushioning element includes a wire coil coated with an elastomeric material disposed in said lumen and sealed in said lumen with end caps.
8. The article according to claim 7, wherein said wire coil is constructed of a shape memory alloy.